

Operator Certification Bulletin | Spring 2012

Drinking Water and Wastewater Operator Certification News

For more news or information please visit
www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater or www.owwco.ca

WHAT'S NEW?

Enhancing Exam Security and Procedures



The Ministry of the Environment has implemented additional measures to help further safeguard the security of operator exams. The ministry continues to work on ways to enhance the integrity of the exam-writing process and lower the risk of unethical operator conduct at exam sessions. The following are some examples:

- When an operator arrives at an exam session, he/she is now handed a sealed exam package to secure the exams until the session begins. This ensures that exam information is not accessed until everyone, including the invigilator, is ready to start the exam session.
- A stringent “zero tolerance” approach for possessing electronic devices, such as cell phones, at

exam sessions is being enforced. The only exception is the use of non-programmable calculators.

- Also, additional proctors will be present at exam sessions with higher enrolment to help administer the exam and ensure proper supervision.

At the start of every exam session, proctors will give instructions for operators to follow. Failure to do so will result in serious repercussions, such as forfeited exams, withheld exam marks and the potential for an operator to be banned from writing future exams.

Other measures, including a formalized code of conduct, are being considered.

While instances of unethical behaviour are very rare, these steps are necessary

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to help protect the integrity of the operator certification program while promoting a sense of fairness among all operators who do conduct themselves ethically and honestly.

The Ministry of the Environment's Drinking Water Ontario Website Gets Refreshed



The Ministry of the Environment's Drinking Water Ontario (DWO) website has proven to be a useful resource for sharing news and guidance about Ontario's drinking water to the public and the regulated community. The average number of daily visits is at 650 – and the most visited page is the Operator Certification and Training Page!

As part of an Ontario government-wide web modernization initiative, DWO has been refreshed to give its

users a more seamless experience. You will find the website has a cleaner look, easier to use navigation and better ways to search for information that is important to you.

If you haven't already done so, be sure to visit the new DWO website at www.ontario.ca/drinkingwater and see for yourself.

Introducing Walkerton Clean Water Centre's Advisory Committees

Submitted by the Walkerton Clean Water Centre

Research Advisory Committee (RAC)

The Centre's Technology Demonstration Facility, along with expert staff, provide a unique platform for practical research and innovation. The new Research Advisory Committee will help the Centre make the most of these assets and support Ontario's water sector.

The committee is lead by Dr. Souleymane Ndongue, Manager of the Walkerton Clean Water Centre's Research and Technology Institute.

Nine members were selected from the many qualified applicants who expressed an interest in supporting research at the Centre.

Their first meeting in March included an orientation to the Centre and networking among committee members, but they quickly got down to work and began a review of the Centre's research objectives.

Look for continual improvement of the WCWC Research Plan. To view the 2011/12 Plan, please visit:

www.wcwc.ca/en/research/plan

Training Advisory Committee (TAC)

The 11-member Training Advisory Committee was established to advise the WCWC Training Institute and the Centre's CEO on their annual training plan. The committee is lead by Brian Jobb, Manager of Walkerton Clean Water Centre's Training Institute. Committee members contribute their professional knowledge and expertise to help meet the training needs of Ontario's water sector.

The ongoing goal of the TAC is to continuously improve the Centre's training program. Members help identify emerging issues in the drinking water industry and recommend training materials to be developed. The TAC will also contribute to the WCWC Training Plan which includes regulatory developments, quality control of course materials and instructors, and course development and delivery across the province.

OWWCO Operator Survey Results

In April, operators were invited to participate in OWWCO's anonymous online survey to give their feedback about customer service, OWWCO's website and access to program information. In total, 638 operators responded! Below are the average scores for some of the questions that were asked:

Topic	Average Response
Accessibility of the OWWCO Customer Service desk	Good
Professionalism of OWWCO staff members	Excellent
Time frame for dealing with operator enquiries	Good
Rating of overall quality of relationship with OWWCO staff	Good
Processing timelines for upgrades, renewals and exams	Good

Survey results also revealed that 96% of respondents have visited OWWCO's website, and 90% of them found the information they needed. Operators also provided some general feedback about the site for consideration, such as:

- Improved layout which groups information in a more user-friendly way
- More information about the study materials recommended for exams
- Making the site easier to navigate

Based on operator feedback from this survey and previous ones, OWWCO is currently working on enhancing their website.

A special thanks to the operators who answered the survey. Your input will help OWWCO continue to improve their services.

DID YOU KNOW...?

Are you a student or temporary labourer looking for opportunities? A temporary Operator-in-Training (OIT) certificate may be the right option for YOU!

If you are in school or are a casual labourer, you may work as a temporary OIT. According to Ontario Regulation 128/04, a temporary OIT can work for less than four consecutive months during a seven month period in a co-op placement, or under a temporary contract while not fully employed as an operator.

To become an OIT (whether on a temporary basis or not), you must:

- ✓ have an Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) or equivalent,
- ✓ pass the OIT examination, and
- ✓ pay the applicable fee.

Here are a few things to remember about a temporary OIT certificate:

- A temporary OIT can only work for four consecutive months during a seven month period.
- A temporary OIT certificate is only issued for a 12 month period and can be renewed up to a maximum of four times.

- To have your temporary OIT certificate renewed, you must complete only one of the following:
 - the Mandatory Certificate Renewal Course, or
 - the Entry Level Course.
- A temporary 12 month certificate will not be renewed if during the previous seven months the OIT worked more than four months as an operator and intends to work more than four months as an operator during the next 7 month period.

To learn how to apply for or renew a temporary OIT certificate, or to find out if this is the right choice for you, please contact the Ontario Water and Wastewater Certification Office at info@owwco.ca, 416-231-2100 or toll free at 1-877-231-2122. Visit the Operator-in-Training [page](#) on OWWCO's [website](#) for more information.

Operators-in-Training (OITs) and Limited Systems

Did you know that an operator who only holds an OIT certificate can not operate a Limited System? Many incorrectly assume they can. A Drinking Water OIT certificate is not equivalent to a Limited System Certificate.

Ontario Regulation 128/04 section 12 s.(1-5) stipulates which certificates are transferable. According to the regulation, OIT certificates are not transferable to another type of system. An operator who only holds an OIT must also have a Limited System Certificate to operate in a Limited System.

To clarify, to become a Limited System operator you will need to do all of the following:

- Write and pass the applicable Limited System examination;
- Successfully complete the Operations of Small Drinking Water Systems course; and
- Apply for the applicable Limited System Certificate.

However, two different types of substitutions may apply, including:

Scenario 1: If you have a Drinking Water OIT Certificate and wish to operate in a Limited System, as long as you have successfully completed the Class 1 Water Treatment exam and the Ministry of the Environment's Entry Level Course for Drinking Water Operators, you can substitute this exam and course to meet the standard requirements of a Limited System Operator. You are therefore eligible to apply for the Limited Surface or Groundwater Certificate.

Scenario 2: If you have successfully completed the Class I Water Distribution and Supply exam as well as the Entry Level Course for Drinking Water Operators, you are eligible for the Limited Ground Water Certificate.

Ontario Certification Working Group – Topics of Recent Meeting

The Operator Certification Working Group (OCWG) has representation from various and diverse organizations in the water and wastewater industry. They offer expert advice to the Ministry of the Environment on issues related to the certification program, and help ensure that program requirements are communicated to operators, operating authorities and other organizations.

The OCWG meets quarterly to talk about issues affecting operator certification and operators' concerns. Below are some of the topics that were discussed at their last meeting on January 26, 2012:

- New Canadian standardized exams for Wastewater Treatment
- Enhancing exam security
- OIT Examinations at employer sites
- Administrative efficiencies with the certification process
- Classifying operator experience

To find out what key issues they're discussing, visit OWWCO's site and follow the link under [Resources](#).

Meet Corrie Stender, Durham College Representative on the OCWG

Corrie (far left in the photo) started her diverse career in water as a Wastewater Operator for Durham Region shortly after graduating. Following that, she became a Water Plant Operator with the City of Kawartha Lakes. When new regulations were introduced in 2003, Corrie shifted gears and joined the compliance team at Kawartha Lakes. During that time, she worked with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario on the O. Reg. 170 Task Force, advocating for operator training.

When the opportunity came up to join Durham College as a Professor for the Water Quality Technician program for

water and wastewater, Corrie embraced it! The program is designed to develop the skills needed to meet the demands of municipalities with water and wastewater treatment systems, water-use industries and environmental monitoring agencies. Today, Durham Region employs about 20 summer students from the program who are placed in various related positions. Many of the graduates are hired by Durham Region each year.

Durham College is an active partner in the water industry. They are one of several Ontario colleges that have entered into agreements with the Ministry of the Environment and

the Walkerton Clean Water Centre to deliver the Entry-Level Drinking Water Operator Mandatory Course. Since the course is incorporated into several environmental programs, graduates have broader career options that include water treatment, water distribution/distribution and supply in addition to wastewater treatment and wastewater collection operator positions.

The college also offers Continuing Education Units (CEUs) training during the summer months for staff from the Regional Municipality of Durham. They offer about 40 training hours to approximately 100 employees each year who are working towards their Water Treatment and Water Distribution Certificates. Many will be “graduating” this summer.

Finally, Durham College administers a busy Facebook account with about 100 active members. The College, its students and graduates use it to stay in touch, network and to spur conversations between “friends”. For example, the first year of the Water Quality Technician Program includes a component that requires students to interview someone working in the field. Durham’s Facebook page allows these connections to happen. Job opportunities throughout Canada are also posted. In addition, Durham College Facebook friends can visit the site for current events and relevant information, such as water-related TV programming, World Water Day events and more.



“Being involved in the Working Group allows me to keep up to date with all of the changes that will impact my students and to give a voice to the new people joining the industry. The OCWG is an amazing and diverse group of individuals who I am constantly learning new things from – things that I can take back to the classroom and share. While I hope I have contributed to the working group, I have to admit that often I have been the student in the room!”
– **Corrie Stender.**

What is the PWO?

Article by Rick Niesink, Chair, Professional Wastewater Operators Committee

The vision of the Water Environment Association of Ontario (WEAO) is to be the finest organization of technical and professional individuals who are dedicated to preserving and enhancing Ontario’s water environment. As part of the WEAO, the Professional Wastewater Operators Committee (PWO) shares the same vision.

The role of the PWO is to address the concerns of people who perform the hands-on tasks needed to operate, analyze and maintain wastewater collection, treatment and laboratory facilities. The PWO:

- provides a forum for wastewater operators to voice their concerns;
- advances the technical skills of wastewater operators through curriculum development, workshop presentations, and annual regional conferences;
- creates, gathers and distributes reference materials required by wastewater operators;

- supports and develops activities, such as the Operations Challenge, that help recognize and develop the skills of wastewater operators;
- helps promote the careers of wastewater operators; and
- acknowledges wastewater operator professionals for their dedicated efforts to making water quality a reality.

Since wastewater operators play a vital role in protecting Ontario’s water environment, it is important that they participate and contribute to WEAO / PWO activities. These activities offer opportunities for training, networking and professional development. One of the key goals of the WEAO is to increase its membership of operators and offer the support they need for the hands-on component of safeguarding our water environment.

In these times of budget constraints and cut-backs, encouraging operator participation in the activities organized by the WEAO and PWO has been a challenge.

Without enough enrollment, it isn't fiscally possible to offer training workshops and conferences. These events help operators develop necessary skills while providing them with a network of professional assistance that supports their ongoing learning and enhances their performance.

The PWO has four regional committees (the Southeast in Kingston, the Southwest in Chatham, the Northeast in Sudbury and the Central in the Orillia area). Since it is sometimes challenging to find enough volunteers and participants to host separate regional operator events, the PWO has begun organizing joint conferences. Last October, the PWO Southeast Regional Committee co-hosted a regional conference with the Eastern Ontario Water Works Association (EOWWA) in Kingston. Jointly they were able

to provide a successful conference with good participation levels. The Northwest Region of Ontario has been successfully hosting joint conferences for some time.

In Ontario, there are seven regional water works associations that represent the interests of drinking water operators. We are currently exploring the possibility of organizing additional joint conferences to give operators greater opportunities for professional development.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding the PWO, or if you would like to join up and volunteer, please contact Rick.Niesink@niagararegion.ca.

WHAT'S COMING UP?

Upcoming Regional Conferences and Seminars in Ontario

Event	Hosted By	Date	Location
OWWA 2012 Certification and Education Committee Workshop - Operator's Training, Watermain Maintenance and Safe www.owwa.com/hm/calendar.php	OWWA	May 29	Toronto
49th Annual Northeastern Ontario Water Works Conference www.owwa.com/hm/inside.php?id=75	OWWA	May 29 & 30	Sault Ste. Marie
Seminar on Nutrient Removal www.weao.org/	WEAO	June 14	Milton
Western Ontario Water Works Conference www.owwa.com/hm/inside.php?id=78	OWWA	October 2 & 3	Chatham
OMWA Drinking Water Leadership Summit www.omwa.org/index.php?id=404	OMWA & MediaEDGE	October 23-25	Toronto

WEAO: Water Environmental Association of Ontario | OWWA: Ontario Water Works Association | OMWA: Ontario Municipal Water Association

Summer at the Centre 2012!

Submitted by the Walkerton Clean Water Centre

Summer at the Centre

Last summer the Walkerton Clean Water Centre stepped up its training programs. Operators across the province, including First Nations, enjoyed great training opportunities.

This summer, WCWC is offering over a dozen courses as part of **Summer at the Centre**. This initiative offers participants high-quality training opportunities in conjunction with local tourism incentives so they can enjoy all there is to see and do in Bruce, Grey and Huron Counties during their stay.



Maintenancefest is back!

Maintenancefest is back by popular demand! This unique hands-on training opportunity provides continuing education units. It was the most popular operator training program in 2011.

Three Maintenancefests have been scheduled this year:

- Smiths Falls at the Gallipeau Centre on May 23 (all day)
- Chatham at Thames Campus of St. Clair College on June 28 (all day)
- Walkerton at WCWC on August 28 and 29 (two full days)

To register for Maintenancefest, go to www.wcwc.ca/registration.

WCWC New Hands-on Courses

- Practical Training for Small Drinking Water System Owners and Operators
- Practice of Rapid Filtration
- Practice of Water Analysis and Interpretation
- Practice of Water Chlorination
- Slow Sand filtration
- Performing Inspections and Maintenance of Fire Hydrants
- Performing Service Taps on Watermains
- Water Conservation (Classroom)

The 2012/13 WCWC course catalogue is now available. To order copies please call **1-866-515-0550**, or email inquiry@wcwc.ca.

Improvements to OWWCO's Website

OWWCO's website is your one-stop information portal for all your certification needs, including exam schedules and exam fees, application forms, information about training requirements, how to become certified, how to renew or upgrade your licence/certificate and so much more. The site receives an average of 12,500 visits each month, which goes to show that it is an instrumental tool for sharing information with you.

As a result of OWWCO's ongoing commitment to service excellence, they are working on enhancing their website to serve you even better. Results from past surveys – to stakeholders and operators – as well as input from OWWCO's customer services staff have provided OWWCO with valuable feedback to improve their website. Below are some of the changes OWWCO is working on:

- Greater accessibility to key documents and information through additional links
- Improved examination section with more information on applying for an exam and what to expect at – and bring to – an exam
- Better navigation features
- Frequently Asked Questions section will be expanded and reorganized by main categories – General, OIT, Exams, Upgrades and Renewals – and further divided into sub-categories



- New section for limited subsystem operators
- New section for training providers including a 'How To' document for course assessment applications
- New section for owners/operating authorities including a 'How To' document for subsystem/facility classification applications

Be sure to visit www.owwco.ca for all your information needs. Remember to subscribe to OWWCO's website to receive current certification news including notifications of when the next bulletin is available.

REMINDERS

Applying to Renew Your Certificate? Timing is everything!

When drinking water operators apply to renew their drinking water certificates every three years, they are required to submit relevant training records. Often operators will submit their renewal application a few weeks or months before their drinking water certificate expires. It is important to note though, that training taken before the certificate expires can not be used for the next renewal.

For example, if your certificate expires on June 30, 2012 and you submit your renewal application and training on May 1, 2012, any training acquired between May 1, 2012 and June 30, 2012 can only be applied towards your current certificate. This is because in this example, the applicable training period is from July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2012. The next training period starts on July 1, 2012. Therefore, if you intend to take



training to be used to renew your certificate, you must do so on or after July 1st.

So, next time you are planning to take training, remember to consider when your certificate expires so you can time things right!

Tips for Filling out Application Forms

As Neil Chisholm, OWWCO's Program Manager tells us, "The number one reason for application processing delays continues to be missing or incorrect information on application forms."

To ensure your application is processed correctly and without delay, the following are some useful tips to keep in mind when completing application forms:

1. Carefully read and follow all the instructions on the form.
2. Complete all sections fully and accurately.
3. Remember to attach all required documentation.
4. Review the form to ensure it includes the required signatures

and signing dates. Signatures are often required from you, your manager and/or the person whose credit card is being used to pay for the application.

5. Before submitting your application, use the checklist to ensure your application is complete.

Keep your WWOCS profile updated

Is your contact information current in WWOCS (Water and Wastewater Operator Certification System)? Notices about Operator Certification eBulletins are sent to your email address in WWOCS, so please keep it updated.

If you don't have access to WWOCS, simply submit a completed request **form** to OWWCO by mail or fax. Copies of **user guides for operators and trainers** are also available on OWWCO's **website**.

